

An Eaglemoss Publication

£1.50
UK &
EIRE

THE SPINE CHILLER Collection

50

Reading's never been so
SCARY!

Malta LMI.25
Australia \$3.95
New Zealand \$4.95



Want to get the **CREEPS** again next week?
To make sure you get your copy of The
SpineChiller Collection every week, ask an
adult either to place a regular order with your
magazine retailer or take out a subscription
to The SpineChiller Collection.

Subscriptions/Back Numbers

Simply write to The SpineChiller
Collection, PO Box 1, Hastings,
TN35 4TJ, enclosing a
cheque/postal order made payable
to Eaglemoss Publications Ltd
for the cover price x the number
of parts you wish to receive
(minimum subscription 12 parts).
Or call our credit card hotline on
01424 755 755.

UK Enquiries

Subscriptions/Back Numbers
Customer Services: 01424 755 755

UK Trade Enquiries

Gary Neale 0171 581 1371

Australia and New Zealand

Subscriptions: Write to the relevant
address below or call the order hotline.
Please enclose a cheque/money order
for the cover price x the number of parts
you wish to receive (minimum
subscription is 12 parts).

Back Numbers: Either ask your
magazine retailer to order the copies for
you or, in case of any difficulties, write to
the relevant address below, enclosing a
cheque/money order for the cover price
x the number of parts you wish to
receive.

Australia Enquiries

Telephone: (03) 9872 4000.

Address: The SpineChiller Collection,
MC Box 460, Eastern Mail Centre, VIC
3110. Please make cheques payable to
Bissett Magazine Services P/L.

New Zealand Enquiries

Telephone: (09) 625 3010.

Address: The SpineChiller Collection,
PO Box 24013,
Royal Oak, Auckland. Please make
cheques payable to Mercury Direct
Marketing.

South Africa

Subscriptions:

Please call the order hotline on
(011) 652 1807.

Back Numbers: Please write to
The SpineChiller Collection, Private Bag
18, Centurion, 0046, enclosing a
cheque/money order made payable to
Eaglemoss Publications for the cover
price x the number of parts you wish to
receive.

Singapore, Malaysia, Malta & Cyprus

Back Numbers available from your
magazine retailer.

Credits

Night Cries from More Bone-chilling Tales of Fright
© 1994 by RGA Publishing Group, Inc.
Key To Strands: Front Cover-FC, Super Scary
Story-SSS, Our Haunted World-OHW, Strange But
True-SBT, Puzzles-PUZ, Classic Serial-CS, The
Unexplained-TU.

Photographs: Mary Evans Picture Library Ltd
OHW1(b), SBT1(t), SBT2(c); Fortean Picture Library
TU2, (Janet & Colin Bord) SBT1(c), (Paul Broadhurst)
SBT2(b); Images Colour Library TU1; The Kobal
Collection Ltd SBT2(t); Oxford Scientific Films Ltd
(Doug Allen) OHW1(t); Mick Sharp (Jean Williamson)
SBT1(b).

Illustrations: Lee Gibbons TU1-2(sp); Leo Hartas
PUZ1-3; John Higgins SBT1-2(sp); Paul Johnson SSS1-
7; David Millgate FRONT COVER(t); Jerry Paris CS1(t);
Lee Sullivan OHW3-4(sp); Andrew Wheatcroft (Virgil
Pomfret) CS1-4; Steve White OHW2(cr); David Wyatt
(Sarah Bown Agency) FRONT COVER(b), OHW1(c),
OHW1-2(sp).

* While the publishers have made every effort to contact
all copyright holders of illustrations published in this
issue, we would be pleased to hear from any that we
have not been able to locate.

Editorial and distribution offices
Eaglemoss Publications Ltd,
7 Cromwell Road, London SW7 2HR

Editor: Jenny Curran

Art Editor: Chantal Newell

Section Editors: Carey Denton,
Christine Hatt, Amanda Maclean,
Vanessa Morgan

Deputy Art Editor: Andy Archer

Designer: Jessica Watts

Picture Researcher: Barry Pells

Production Controller: Teresa Magnowska

© 1998 Eaglemoss Publications

All rights reserved

Printed by: CSM Impact, England

Colour origination by: Colourscan, Singapore

50 CONTENTS

SUPER SCARY STORY
Night Cries

OUR HAUNTED WORLD
Eastern Canada
A Nagging Feeling

STRANGE BUT TRUE
King Arthur

CLASSIC SERIAL
A Christmas Carol
Chapter 2

THE UNEXPLAINED
Magical Mermaids

PUZZLES
Freaky Forest

Next week in

**THE
SPINECHILLER
Collection**

SUPER SCARY STORY
Bloodlines

OUR HAUNTED WORLD
Czech Republic and Slovakia
Cut-glass Clot!

STRANGE BUT TRUE
Dreamtime

CLASSIC SERIAL
A Christmas Carol
Chapter 3

THE UNEXPLAINED
Plant Power

PUZZLES
Grisly Gods



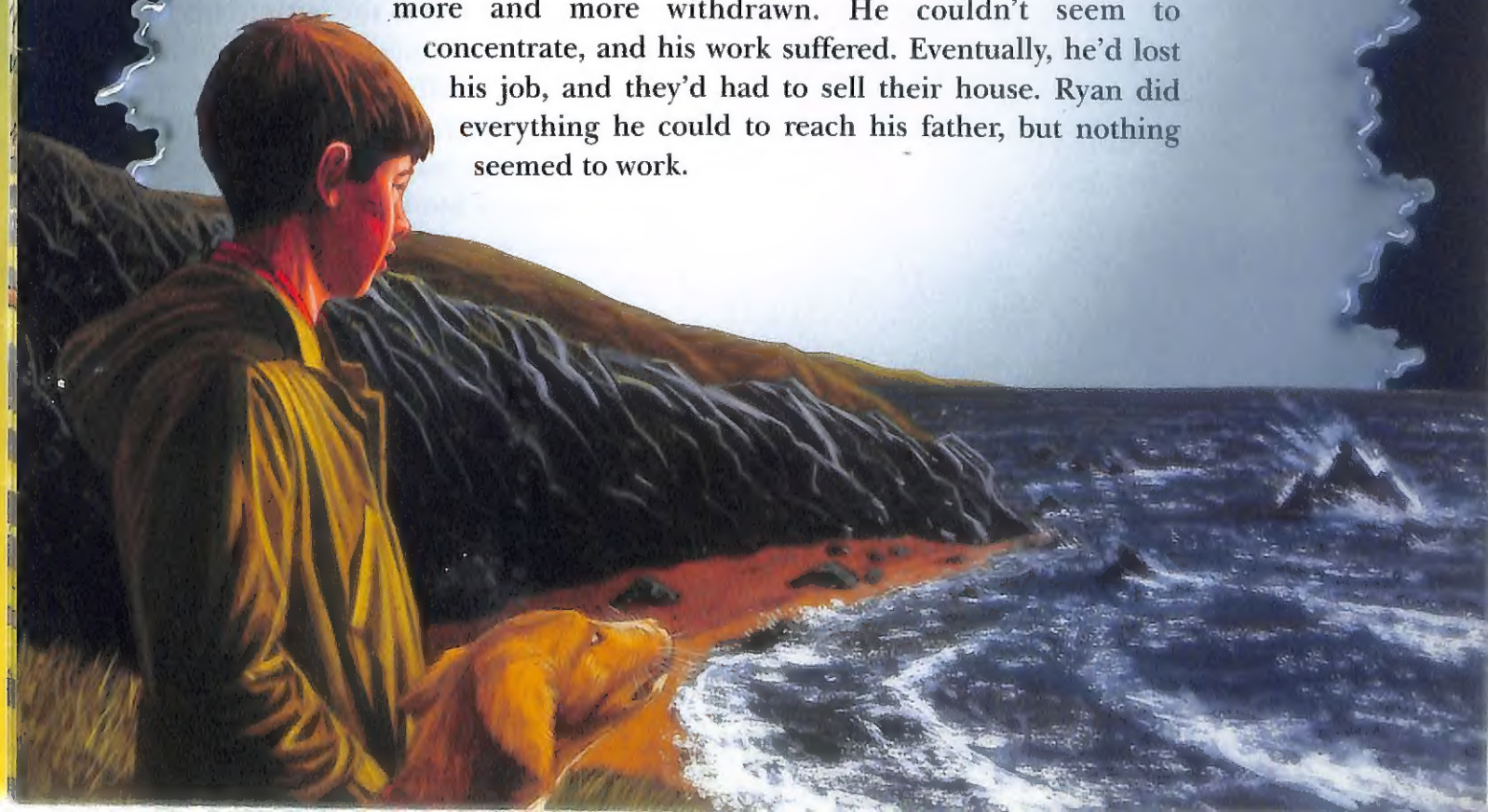
NIGHT CRIES



Ryan stood on a rise above the cold, wind-whipped
seashore. Wave after foam-tipped wave rolled in from
the steel-grey ocean and crashed on the rocky strip of
beach below his vantage point. Ryan had always
loved the ocean. He was an excellent swimmer and
he'd taken sailing lessons for the past three summers. Something
about the power of the sea and the loneliness of the shore
reassured him. He felt as if he were standing at the edge of the
Earth. This was the perfect place to start a new life.

When Ryan's mum had died in a car accident eight months
before, it had seemed as if the whole world had been turned
upside down. His dad had tried to be strong and help their
relatives and friends through the grief and anger, but Ryan soon
realised that something in his father had died, too.

For a while, everyone had tried to help and be supportive. At
first people were patient and understanding, but then things had
begun to fall apart. Ryan realised that his dad was becoming
more and more withdrawn. He couldn't seem to
concentrate, and his work suffered. Eventually, he'd lost
his job, and they'd had to sell their house. Ryan did
everything he could to reach his father, but nothing
seemed to work.



Then things suddenly began to take a turn for the better. Ryan's dad had once been in the Navy and he loved the sea, so when the job of lighthouse keeper at Bowman's Cove had been offered to him by an old Navy friend, he'd jumped at the chance. Ryan had been pleased, too. They had decided to start life over again as far away from their life in the city as possible.



They had arrived in the seaside village three weeks ago, and the locals had welcomed them warmly. Ryan had even made friends at his new school.

Their new home was a small but cosy two-storey cottage at the base of the lighthouse, which stood on a wide jetty known as Land's End. It deserved its lonely name. The jetty was a rugged mass of black rock that jutted out into the frigid Atlantic Ocean. A narrow, dangerous channel separated jagged Castle Rock from the tip of the point.

Ryan took a deep breath of the crisp salt air and turned up the collar of his jacket against the autumn chill as he surveyed the scene. "It's absolutely perfect," he said aloud. His dog, Shah, wagged her tail in agreement. She, too, loved their evening walks along the cove.

Ryan bent down and picked up a chunk of drift-wood. Shah looked up expectantly.

"Go get it, girl," he shouted, tossing the wood with all his might. As the dog bounded across the sand, a flash of colour drew Ryan's attention to the rolling sea below the jetty. Straining to get a better look in the gathering dusk, he caught a glimpse of a bright yellow boat and the flutter of oars.

"Dad?" he said softly. "What is he doing rowing out to the point now?"

"What, indeed?" The sound of a deep voice made Ryan jump. A tall, burly man was sitting nearby on a jumble of rock.

"Joshua." Ryan sighed with relief. "You startled me. I didn't see you there."

Shah raced up and dropped the drift-wood at Ryan's feet, then greeted the old fisherman happily. Shah liked Joshua. He had been very nice to Ryan and his dad ever since they'd first arrived in Bowman's Cove. He and his wife had invited them to dinner at their home, and Joshua had even taken Ryan for a boat tour of the local sites.

Joshua patted Shah on the head and glanced again towards the jetty. "This isn't a good time for anyone to be in these waters," he said with concern.

"I'm not worried," Ryan said. "Dad can handle a boat in any kind of weather. He must be rowing out to check the buoys in the channel. One of them broke loose last night." Still, Ryan couldn't help being a little troubled. It was an odd time for his dad to be doing a chore like that.

"It isn't the sea that is to be feared, son," Joshua said. He tapped his pipe on the rock, and then began to refill it with tobacco from an old leather pouch. "It's Sarah Malone." Joshua struck a match and held it to the bowl of the pipe.



Ryan studied the old man's face in the flickering glow of the match light. "OK," he said, grinning. "I'll bite. Who is Sarah Malone?"

"In life, she was a spiteful woman who did little good for most and seemed to go out of her way to be unpleasant to people," the fisherman began. "She didn't have that many friends in Bowman's Cove. But in her defence, everyone said she was a devoted wife."

"Did you say in life?" Ryan asked.

Joshua nodded. "That I did. Sarah Malone drew her last, tortured breath one hundred years ago, at the end of that very jetty." He tilted his head towards Castle Rock. "A powerful gale was blowing in from the northeast, and those that could brought their boats to port ahead of the fearsome storm. Colin Malone was said to have been a fine sailor, but the ocean is unpredictable. He never made it." Joshua paused to draw on his pipe. "Sarah would not accept that he was lost at sea. She came down to the shore that very night and crawled out on to the rocks.

Screaming with rage and shaking her fists, she demanded that the ocean give her husband back."

"What happened to her?" Ryan prompted.

"The sea claimed her as well," Joshua answered in a sombre tone. "And since then, every twenty-five years, on the anniversary of her death, she returns to Castle Rock to seek vengeance by claiming another soul before the sun rises. Someone always drowns on that fateful night."

Ryan laughed. "That's a great tale to scare tourists with, but you don't mean to tell me that the locals really believe it?"

The look on Joshua's face made Ryan's smile fade. "I do," the old man said, gazing out at the waves. "You won't see a ship from Bowman's Cove leaving the harbour on this day or the next. The time is only two nights away, and Sarah might already be working her evil enchantment. She chooses her victim carefully and sways his thoughts." Joshua leaned closer to Ryan as if to tell him something of great importance. "You'll find all of the local

fishermen safely at home in front of a fire, with the shutters secured across the windows to close out the sound of the sea."

From high above, Ryan heard the strange, eerie call of a large sea-bird circling through the mist overhead. "That's the Great Northern Diver," Joshua said solemnly. "Its arrival is another sign that the time is near. The bird is waiting – hoping to rescue the unfortunate soul from Sarah Malone's grasp and escort the phantom into eternity."



Later, at home in his warm bed, Ryan couldn't fall asleep. Usually he found the sound of the waves soothing, but tonight was different. He hadn't really believed the old

legend that Joshua had told him, but now something about the ocean sounded sinister. After tossing and turning for a while, he stood and looked out of his bedroom window. The water shimmered with reflected moonlight, and the dark jetty stood out sharply. Ryan studied the stark outline of Castle Rock and watched the angry sea foaming around the rocks that lurked just beneath the surface. Then he saw something else. Huddling beside him, Shah nudged gently at his hand and whimpered.

"Do you see it, too, girl?" Ryan whispered. "It looks like..." Ryan's eyes widened and he tried to make sense of what he was looking at. "There's someone standing on Castle Rock. That's impossible! How could anyone...?"

The words died in his throat. For a moment, Ryan clearly glimpsed the form of a young woman. Her long hair and flowing white gown danced on the wind. Then, before his eyes, she seemed to fade into a wispy haze.

"I don't believe it," he said firmly to himself. "It was just sea foam or fog or something. Now old Joshua's got me seeing things." Shaking his head, Ryan dropped his gaze to the beach below and caught his breath. There was his father, standing on the beach in his pyjamas. He was staring in the direction of the point – as if in a trance.

Ryan was up early the next morning. He noticed that the sky on the horizon was a deep shade of red.

"Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning," he recited to Shah. "We'll probably be getting a pretty bad storm soon." Ryan knew there was some truth to that old saying. It had something to do

with moisture in the air and how it reflected sunlight. He dressed quickly and marched downstairs. It was Saturday, and he and his dad always drove into town on Saturday for a special fried breakfast at the cafe. He found his dad in the kitchen preparing toast and hot cereal.

"What's up, Dad?" Ryan asked. "Aren't we going to town for breakfast?"

His father grinned and set a plate of toast on the table, then turned back to the oven. He seemed to be in a great mood. "I have a lot of work to catch up on around here, son. Would you mind terribly if we skipped it today?"

Ryan tried to hide his disappointment. "I suppose not," he murmured picking up a triangle of buttery toast. "Dad, did you see it, too?"

"See what?" his father asked.

Ryan could tell that something was amiss. "I know it sounds crazy, but I was sure I saw a woman out on Castle Rock last night. I thought that maybe you went outside because you'd seen her, too."

His father stiffened slightly, and his mood seemed to darken. "I wasn't outside last night," he answered. "You must have been dreaming."

"But, Dad, I..."

"You must have been dreaming," his dad repeated, sternly. "Sit down and eat your breakfast before it gets cold. I have to see to some things outside."

Ryan flinched as the kitchen door banged shut. Glancing down, he noticed his father's slippers on the floor near the door. He picked them up and ran his



finger across the toes. They were damp and covered with sand.

That night, the weather took a turn for the worse. Snug in his bed, Ryan suddenly woke up and listened as the howl of the wind rose outside and rattled the window panes. He squeezed his eyes tightly shut. He wanted to stay right where he was – safe from whatever

terror was building out there in the dark. But somehow he felt himself being drawn to the window. Slowly, he pushed the blankets aside and went to the window. He stood looking out at the seething ocean.

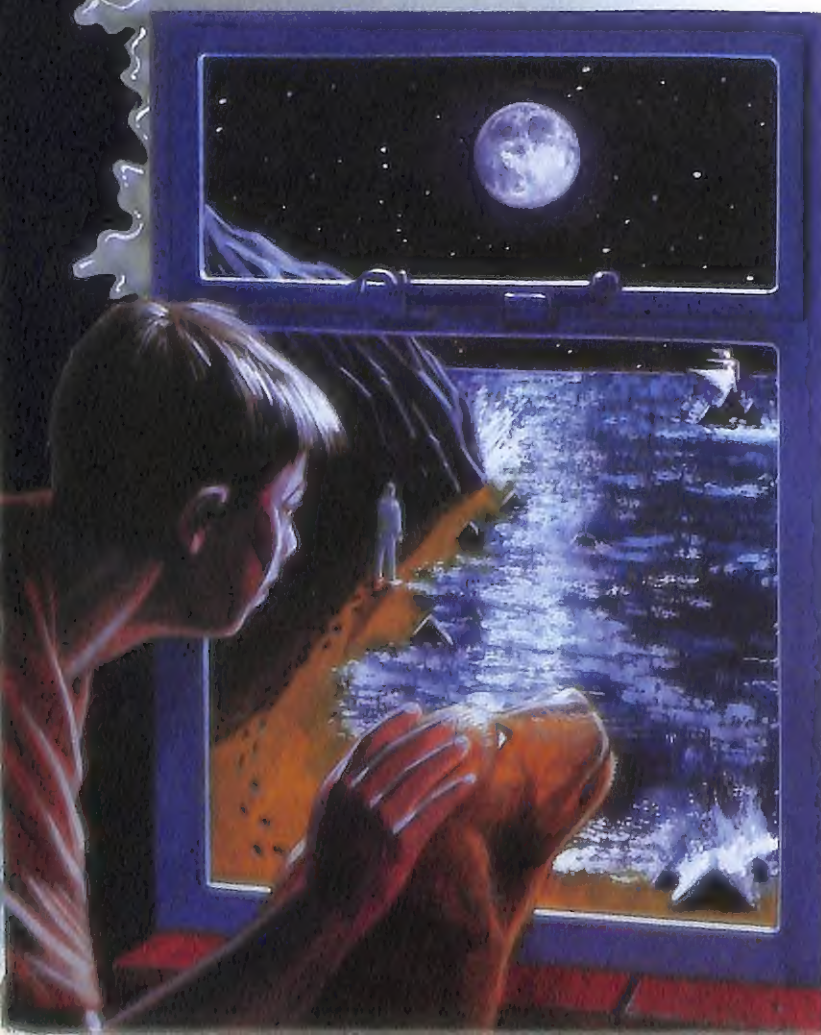


This time, he could see the woman clearly. She raised her hand and seemed to beckon him.

"Sarah Malone," Ryan whispered under his breath. But all at once he became aware that it wasn't him that she wanted. A sense of panic gripped him. Ryan looked down and frantically scanned the beach. Stunned, he saw his father untying one of the small boats secured at the dock. He threw open his window and screamed out into the stormy night.

"Dad! No!" But the icy wind stung his face and whipped Ryan's warning away. His father jumped into the craft and headed out into the rough water. Fighting his own terror, Ryan threw on his clothes and sprinted to the dock.

He worked to untie the second boat. Sea spray had soaked the knots and made



them difficult to untie, but finally Ryan freed the boat. He leaped into it and began to row with all his might. The ocean roared in protest, and he strained at the oars to make headway against the rolling swells. Twisting to look over his shoulder, he could see Sarah Malone standing like a ghastly sentinel on Castle Rock. Her eyes blazed red, and she threw back her head in ghostly laughter as Ryan's dad allowed his boat to become caught in the swirling waves around the rock. Drawing nearer to the point, Ryan heard snatches of his father's voice carried on the wind.

"Anna!" he cried out above the clamour of the surge. "Don't leave me again!"

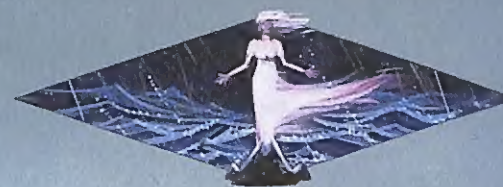
"No!" Ryan screamed. "She's tricked you, Dad. That isn't Mum - it's Sarah

Malone!" But it was too late. In horror, Ryan watched as his father's boat was enveloped by a veil of foam and dragged beneath the surface.

"No, Sarah Malone!" Ryan howled defiantly. "I won't let you win!"

The spiteful phantom turned her eyes on the terrified boy, and the oars flew from his hands. Suddenly trapped in the churning surge, the small boat began to splinter beneath Ryan. He was thrown into the icy, black water.

"DAD!" he screamed, choking and gasping for breath. "DAD! HELP ME!"



Suddenly, Ryan felt his head being held safely above the surface. He saw the sky begin to lighten with the first glimmer of sunrise. He also sensed his father's strong arms around him and heard his voice. But he couldn't actually feel his father's physical presence.

"Hang on, son!" His father's voice was strange and distant. "You're going to make it!"

The dawn was growing brighter as Ryan felt firm sand beneath him and dragged himself on to shore. "We did it Dad!" he gasped, thinking his father was right beside him. "This time she didn't win."

His father's answer seemed to be coming from far away. "No, this time she didn't win. She turned her attention to you for only a moment, but it was long enough to free me... to save you."

Ryan sat up shivering. He was alone on the beach. He stared out at the point and saw nothing but waves crashing against the barren rock. Then, from above, he heard the eerie call of the Great Northern Diver as it began its journey. Sarah Malone had lost her battle to capture their souls, but

Ryan knew that he had lost, too. His father was gone forever.

THE END



OUR HAUNTED WORLD

Eastern Canada is home to some frightening things...



THE FROZEN VOYAGE

In 1775, in icy waters off Newfoundland, sailors on the *Herald* climbed aboard the battered ship *Octavius*. A spine-chilling sight greeted them below deck. *Octavius*' captain had frozen to death, slumped over his log. Behind him lay his crew, frozen in their bunk beds, huddled in blankets. The captain had logged the first part of the ship's journey – 13 years earlier – when it sailed north of Alaska into frozen waters. Tragically, the log ended there. With a frozen cargo on board, *Octavius* continued the voyage sailing thousands of miles before drifting into icy waters off Newfoundland.

Its voyage was considered a nautical miracle. *Octavius* had sailed the north-west passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans – the first ship ever to do so!

THE AMHERST MYSTERY

A troublesome spirit called 'Bob' was out to get young Esther Cox, from Amherst, Nova Scotia, in 1878, so the story goes. One night, Esther woke up in bed screaming. She had swelled up like a balloon, her eyes were popping out and her hair was standing on end. Moments later, she went 'pop' with a loud bang and returned to normal size! Her living nightmare did not stop there. She was stabbed with a pen and a fork, hit over the head with a broom and had flaming matches fly on her bed. But, most frightening of all, was a message that appeared on her wall, signed by Bob. It read: 'Esther, you are mine to kill.' Esther fled from her home (left). When she returned months later, Bob had vanished.



BACK BEDROOM

A family moved into a beautiful old farmhouse in southern Ontario, with their two large sheep dogs. Everything was perfect, except for the back bedroom, which had an eerie feel to it and was always freezing cold. Even the dogs refused to go into the room. They growled, barked and put their ears back whenever they went near it. If anyone dared sleep in the room, they had nightmares about death. The mystery was finally solved when locals told them that a woman had been murdered in the room by her jealous husband, before he cut his wrists and bled to death on the floor. After hearing that, the family turned the bedroom into a storage room!

THE FIRE STARTER

In 1941, golfers at the Dominion Country Club in Windsor, Ontario, were afraid to touch anything in the clubhouse in case it caught fire. Tablecloths, curtains and towels all burst into flames for no apparent reason, members claimed. When the manager reached for the telephone book to phone the fire chief, flames jumped out of the pages at him, one article reported! Then when a doubting insurance man came to the clubhouse to investigate, a broom caught fire right in front of him! After 43 incidents, the mystery fires finally stopped.



A NAGGING FEELING

A friend of a friend heard a tale about a Canadian Mountie...



1 Fred was getting too old for his job in the Rockies. After he was forced to retire, he moved to Toronto to be near his grandchildren.



2 He couldn't afford a house but managed to find an apartment a minute's walk from his family.



3 Fred didn't go down too well with the neighbours. He seemed to be forever carting heavy loads in the lift – and now it had broken down.



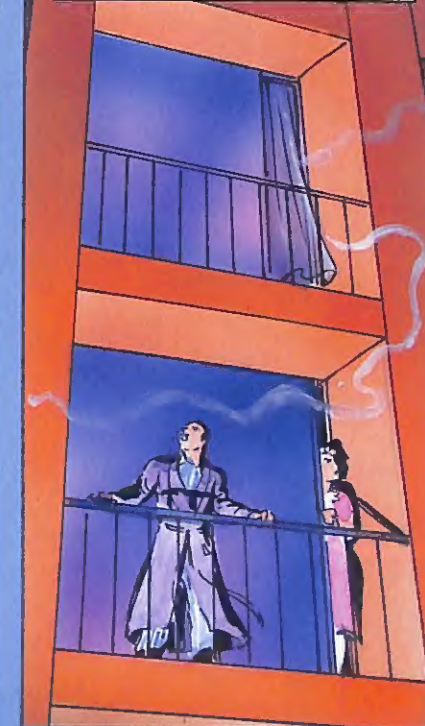
4 But it was the strange noises coming from his flat that really bothered them. Mysterious thudding and scraping sounds gave them sleepless nights.



5 One couple got so fed up, they knocked on Fred's door in the middle of the night. Not meaning to appear rude, Fred peered out and told them to go away.



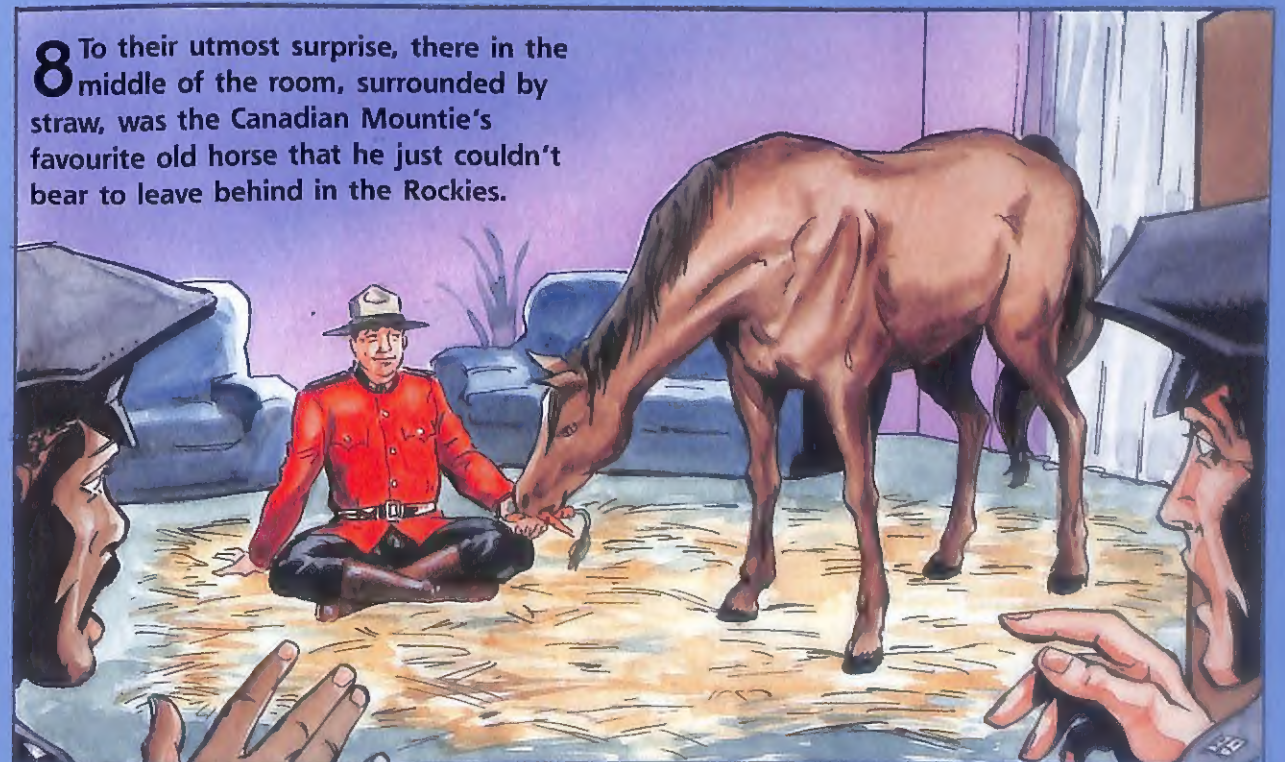
6 Some time later, Fred's neighbours started to smell something strange – a smell one normally associated with the countryside.



7 The neighbours could stand it no longer and called the police. The officers banged hard on the door. It flung open.

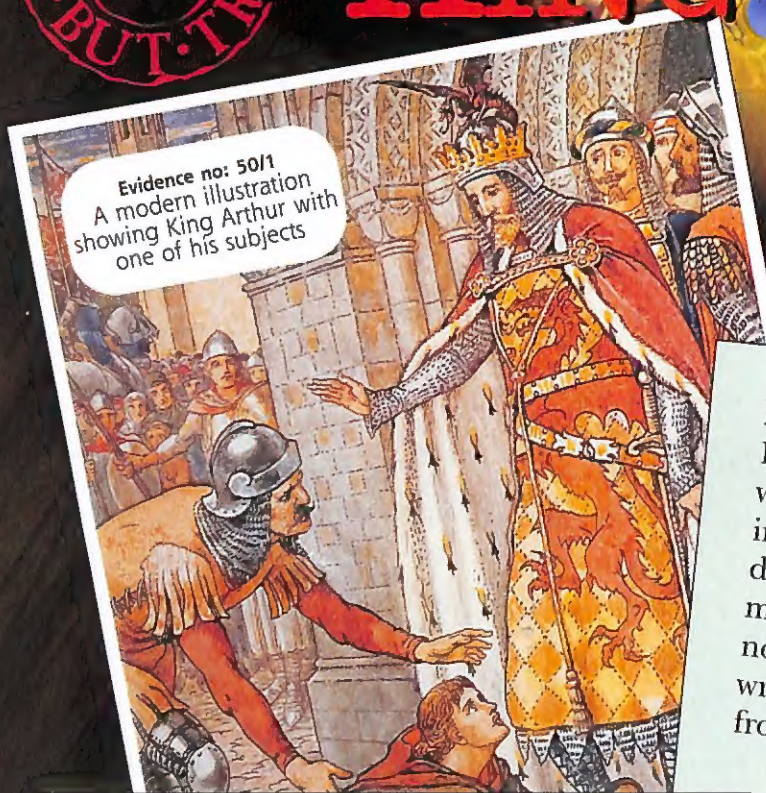


8 To their utmost surprise, there in the middle of the room, surrounded by straw, was the Canadian Mountie's favourite old horse that he just couldn't bear to leave behind in the Rockies.



STRANGE
BUT TRUE

KING ARTHUR



Evidence no: 50/1
A modern illustration showing King Arthur with one of his subjects

Special Investigation File: 50

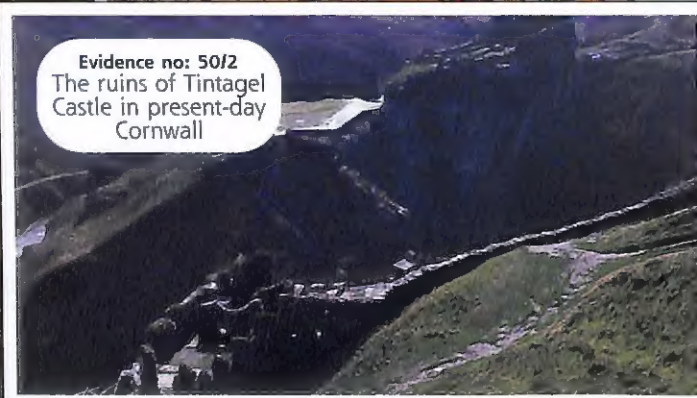
Subject: an ancient British ruler
Place: various sites in the West of England

SpineChiller creates a file

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 410AD, the last Roman soldiers in Britain withdrew to Italy to defend their huge empire from invaders. As a result, the local people were left to defend themselves against Saxon invaders from mainland Europe, as well as rival tribesmen from the north. About 400 years later, historians began to write about a particularly brave warlord or chieftain from these times. He was called Arthur.

Over the centuries, the story of Arthur, the brave chieftain, grew and grew. An 11th-century bishop, Geoffrey of Monmouth, wrote his 'History of the Kings of England'. In it, he described Arthur as a king and gave an imaginative account of his life. And from the 12th century onwards, the legend of King Arthur became more and more colourful. But does Arthur's story contain any truth at all?



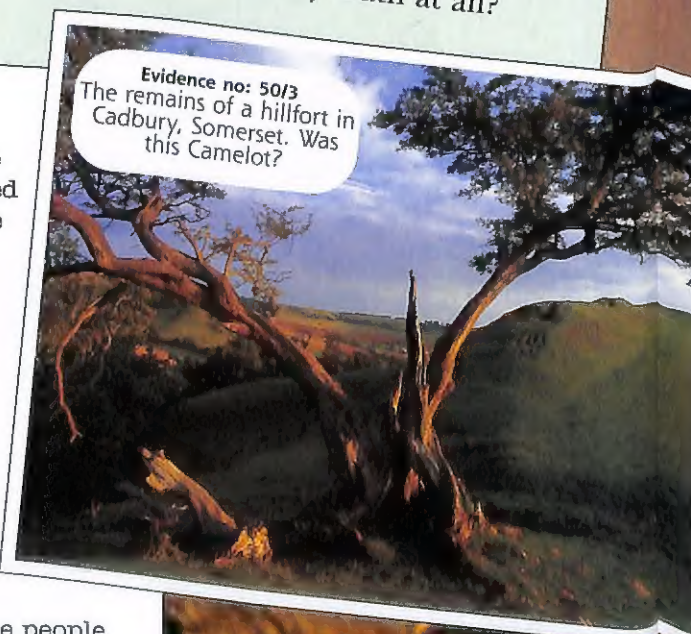
Evidence no: 50/2
The ruins of Tintagel Castle in present-day Cornwall

THE MYTH

Arthur was born in Tintagel Castle, Cornwall, in the 6th century AD. He was educated by Merlin, a wizard, and became king at 15. Arthur set up his court in Camelot with his trusted Round Table knights. One of the knights, Lancelot, fell in love with his beloved wife, Guinevere, and was banished from Camelot. Arthur's nephew, Mordred, also a Round Table knight, then tried to seize power. The two men met in battle at Camlann. Mordred was killed and Arthur was wounded. He was taken to Avalon where he died.

THE REALITY

Arthur could not have been born in the existing Tintagel Castle as it dates from the 12th century. But in 1998, a stone with the 6th-century inscription 'The man known as Arthur...made this' was found in the nearby town. This suggests that an important person of that name once lived there. Also, archaeological evidence has led some people to believe that Camelot was possibly Cadbury in Somerset, that the Battle of Camlann may have taken place in 537 near Camelford, Cornwall, and that Avalon was probably Glastonbury in Somerset.



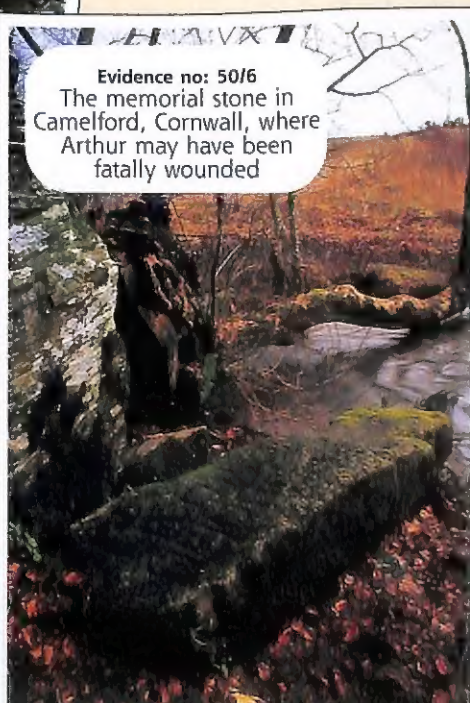
Evidence no: 50/3
The remains of a hillfort in Cadbury, Somerset. Was this Camelot?



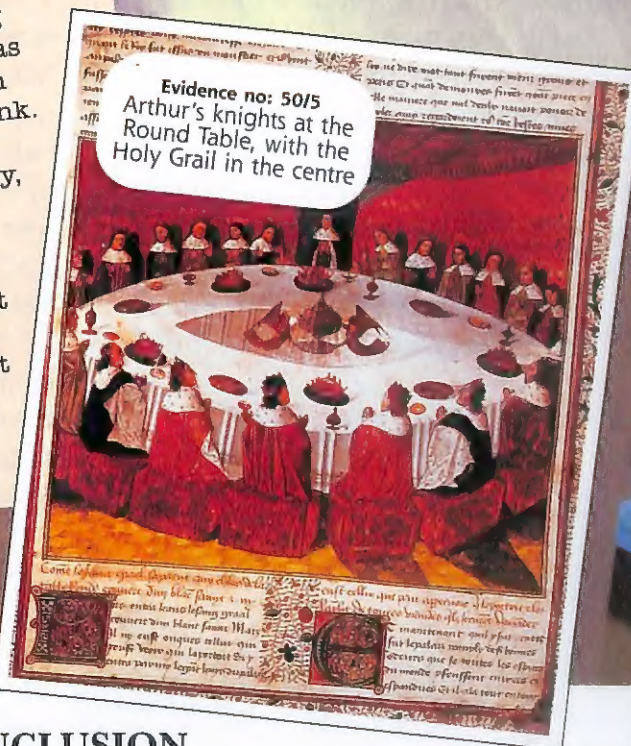
Evidence no: 50/4
Arthur pulls his sword from a stone in the 1981 film 'Excalibur'

TOWN TOURIST TRAIL

While you are in Winchester don't miss King Arthur's Round Table, which hangs in the Great Hall. Arthur and his 28 knights are said to have sat around it to plan their exciting adventures. Among the most important was their search for the Holy Grail, a cup from which they believed Jesus Christ had drunk. The Round Table story became part of Arthurian legend only in the 12th century, when a poet called Wace wrote about it. The Winchester table itself was not built until about 1250. More than 200 years later, writer Thomas Malory claimed that Winchester was the site of Camelot. But most modern experts do not believe that this story is true.



Evidence no: 50/6
The memorial stone in Camelford, Cornwall, where Arthur may have been fatally wounded



Evidence no: 50/5
Arthur's knights at the Round Table, with the Holy Grail in the centre

CONCLUSION

Many historians now say that Arthur is a purely legendary character. Others think that myths about him were based on the adventures of a real warlord. But some people will always believe that Arthur was a mighty ruler of all Britain - 'The Once and Future King', who one day will return to save Britain. Only time will tell!

December 1981

Dear Tom

I have just seen a great new film about King Arthur called 'Excalibur'. You may not know, but this was the name of his sword. According to legend, when Arthur's father died, the wizard Merlin plunged a sword into a stone. Then he declared that whoever pulled the sword out would be the next king. Many tried but only Arthur succeeded.

That's not the end of the story. When Arthur died, one of his loyal knights threw Excalibur into a lake. At once, a mysterious hand emerged from the water to catch it.

Don't miss the film - I'm sure you'll enjoy it.
All the best
Luke

Unexplained



Chapter 2

A Christmas Carol

Retold from a story by Charles Dickens

Scrooge awoke to hear the church bells striking the hour. But something was wrong. The bells were chiming one o'clock, but he had fallen into bed after that time. Had an icicle frozen the clock's workings? Or had he slept through an entire day?

Before Scrooge could think further, a bright light filled the room and the miser found himself face to face with a visitor. Scrooge jumped in fright. The unearthly figure before him was either a child or a very old man. Scrooge was so rattled and confused that he could not work out which. A strange light flickered around the figure, who wore a tunic of pure white.

"Are you the s-s-spirit, Sir, whose c-c-coming was foretold to me?" stammered Scrooge.

"I am! I am the Ghost of Christmas Past – your past, Ebenezer Scrooge. I am here for your welfare."

The voice was soft and gentle, but deep and low at the same time.

"Surely my welfare would be better served by a good night's rest. I have work to do tomorrow," Scrooge protested.

The spirit said nothing, but took hold of Scrooge's arm. Suddenly, Scrooge found himself heading towards his bedroom wall, caught in the ghost's grip. He screamed, but miracle of miracles, he and the ghost passed right through the wall and out into a country road, many miles from the city.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Scrooge. "I was born here."

Scrooge stared wide-eyed as many scenes from his past floated into view. Some were wonderful to behold, such as times spent playing with his younger sister. Others were much more tragic. Scrooge shuddered as he watched his father and teachers beat him. Then he cried for help as they locked him in his room night after night.

"These are but shadows of people that have been. They cannot see or hear us," said the ghost.

"Take me away, I cannot bear it," Scrooge begged. Scrooge's mood lightened when he saw a portly, grey-haired man at work in an office.

"Why, there's old Fezziwig. As a young lad I was an apprentice of his, you know," Scrooge said with a smile.

The ghost and Scrooge watched Fezziwig shut his shop early on Christmas Eve, then hold a joyful party in his offices. Scrooge watched his younger self joining in the celebrations.

As the scene unfolded, Scrooge looked on and lost himself in the party. He remembered all the dances that the fiddler played, and watched as he, Scrooge, jigged and polkaed with the guests. He smiled, too, at the tremendous buffet of cold meats, mince pies and ale that old Fezziwig had provided for the party-goers.

"Just three or four pounds worth of food and drink! Surely Fezziwig didn't deserve all the praise those silly people gave him," said the ghost as the party ended.

"Oh but he did," replied Scrooge, "and not just for the party. He employed many people and could have made their lives hard and miserable, but he chose instead to make them happy..."

Scrooge's words tailed off as he fell into thought. The ghost watched him and smiled to itself before showing Scrooge a new, much later scene.

Scrooge was now a healthy young man with greedy, hawk-like eyes. He sat under a tree with a beautiful woman, who was speaking.

"I have been replaced by another idol in your life, Ebenezer," she said. "There is no point in your denying it. I have seen it in your actions during the past few years. Money is all that interests you now. My decision to end our relationship may cause you pain. Part of me hopes it does, for you have caused me much. But, eventually, you will dismiss our romance as purely an



unprofitable dream. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

Scrooge found hot, salty tears streaming down his face as he watched the scene. He tried to say "Bah! Humbug!" but the words stuck in his throat. So instead, in a broken voice, he said, "Spirit! Please remove me from this place."

Slowly, the ghost and the scene faded and Scrooge found himself back in his bedroom. Utterly exhausted and upset, he fell into a deep sleep.

When Scrooge awoke, an unnatural light in his living room drew him towards it. What a transformation! The room was decked in Christmas decorations and warmed by an enormous fire in the grate. An enormous feast filled the floor.

"Come in and get to know me! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," boomed a jolly giant clothed in a green robe with a white fur border.

Scrooge entered timidly, his eyes gazing at the floor. He was not the confident

WORD POWER

unearthly – supernatural; not of this world

rattled – uneasy; frightened

portly – fat; bulky

apprentice – a person who works for another while learning a trade from him or her

eked out – shared out (a limited amount) in small portions

callipers – metal splints or supports for legs

smarted – (here) felt mental pain

recital – a musical performance

Scrooge of before. The next instant, he and the ghost were standing unseen in the home of Bob Cratchit, his clerk. Scrooge looked on as the clerk's family celebrated Christmas as best they could.

Scrooge watched keenly as they eked out several small pans of boiled vegetables,

arranging them thinly to fill each plate. He also observed Bob Cratchit carve every last sliver off the Christmas goose.

Scrooge counted the Cratchits' children. He had no idea that his clerk's family was so large. His eyes were drawn to the smallest of them all – a tiny, frail boy with his legs in callipers. This was Tiny Tim. Scrooge found it hard to stop looking at him.

Every possible compliment that could be given to a meal was uttered by the family as they ate. No one suggested or even thought that it was sparse for Christmas Day, or small for such hungry people.

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!" cried Bob Cratchit, and all the family echoed his words.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, his withered hand clasping his father's fingers tightly.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest that he had never felt before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

The spirit shook his head.

"No, NO!" wailed Scrooge.

"If he is to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population," said the ghost in reply.

Scrooge winced as his own words were repeated back to him. Then he hung his head and remained silent. But on hearing his own name, he looked up again. Bob Cratchit was proposing a toast to him.

"To Mr Scrooge, the founder of this feast!"

"The founder indeed!" cried Mrs Cratchit, angrily. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon."

"My dear," soothed Bob, "do not speak so harshly in front of the children on Christmas Day."

"I will drink a toast to you and our family, but not to that hard, unfeeling brute," she replied.

As Mrs Cratchit said those words, the ghost whisked Scrooge away through the city. They journeyed through kitchens, parlours and dining rooms. Then they left the city and visited farms, mines and ships on the high seas. Everywhere they went, people were engaging in Christmas festivities.

Eventually, the ghost led Scrooge to his nephew's lodgings. There, a dozen guests were engaged in all sorts of party games and fun. The sound of laughter echoed through the house. Scrooge saw his niece, then heard her husband's voice.

"Honestly, Scrooge said that Christmas was a humbug!"

The guests all laughed, but Scrooge smarted.

"Shame on him," scolded Scrooge's niece. "But I think he's the one who misses out, not us."

"True. His wealth does him and others no service," said his nephew.

A little later, Scrooge's nephew and niece gave a recital on piano and harp.

Scrooge normally hated music, but this seemed enchanting even to his ears. He became completely lost in its sweet sounds.

Scrooge applauded along with the guests when the recital finished. Without realising it, he had become so light of heart that he joined in all the parlour games they played afterwards. He was surprisingly good at charades, even though the guests could not hear any of his answers. At length, the ghost indicated that they had to leave.

"Can we stay just one more half-hour?" Scrooge begged, just like a little boy. He was having so much fun. But the ghost shook its head and they left the house.

"My time is nearly over," said the phantom, unveiling two wretched children, who had been hidden beneath his robe. They were miserable creatures, painfully thin, dirty and frightened. Scrooge's heart went out to them.

"Are they yours, Spirit?" he found himself asking.

"No they are Man's," replied the ghost. "The boy is ignorance, the girl is want. Beware them both, especially ignorance. For if you don't pay attention to the lessons we have tried to teach you, doom will follow."

"Have the boy and girl no refuge?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons? Are the workhouses still in operation?" the ghost said, repeating Scrooge's earlier words. Then it disappeared.

Scrooge immediately found himself back in his bed and began to think about everything he had just seen. Suddenly, a chill ran down his spine and he looked up. There before him stood another solemn phantom. Like a mist, it started drifting slowly along the ground towards him.



MAGICAL MERMAIDS

Stories of mythical mermaids – half women, half fish – are as popular today as they ever were. Characters like Disney's 'Little Mermaid' have kept the story of these fishy beauties alive and well. However, eyewitness accounts make it clear that many people in the past were convinced that mermaids and other seafolk were real.

BEAUTY OR BEAST?

Mermaids were believed to be beautiful but dangerous – capable of luring sailors to their deaths!

One of the earliest mermaid stories tells of the sea sirens – half birds, half women – who sang to sailors. The Greek hero Ulysses became the only mortal to hear the wonderful song of the sirens – and survive! He instructed his crew to block their ears with wax and tie him to the mast. The sirens' song had driven many sailors to jump to their deaths on the dangerous rocks – but because Ulysses could not jump, and his crew could not hear them, he and his crew survived.

Legends of the sea sirens have evolved over the years. In adapted stories, the half women, half birds acquired fish tails.

► **TAIL TALES**
As well as mermaids, mermen and even twin-tailed merfolk featured in church carvings.



▲ **MERMAID TO THE RESCUE**
Not all mermaids were dangerous. They could warn of coming storms, guide fishermen to a good catch or save a drowning man.



OLD STORIES

Mermaid stories probably grew out of early beliefs in fish-tailed sea gods. But it was the early Christians who kept the mermaid myths alive. They believed that mermaids and mermen were fallen angels – not good enough for heaven, but not bad enough for hell! Carvings of mermaids and mermen can be found in medieval churches across Europe.

THE JOKE'S ON YOU

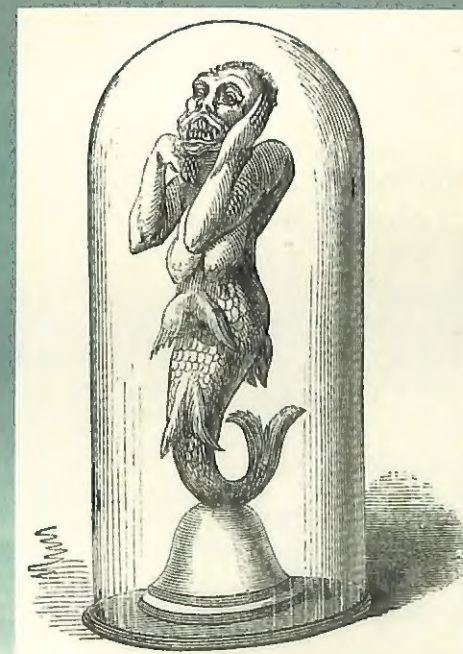
In the 1820s, a vicar from Cornwall became so exasperated by his parishioners' belief in mermaids that he decided to see just how gullible they were. Wearing a wig made from plaited seaweed, with oilskins wrapped around his legs and naked from the waist up, he positioned himself by moonlight on a rock near the shore and sang – not very tunefully – until word spread of the mermaid sighting. In front of a considerable audience, he finished with a raucous round of 'God Save The King' before plunging into the sea!

MERMAID SIGHTINGS!

Early sea explorers believed in mermaids because they claimed they actually saw them. Columbus reported sighting three mermaids off the coast of Guyana, in South America. The famous explorer of the Canadian coastline, Henry Hudson, gave a detailed account of a mermaid sighting by his ship's crew in 1608. He described her as having the back and breasts of a woman, with white skin and long black hair, and the tail of a porpoise which was speckled like a mackerel. Now that's a pretty detailed description!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Some unscrupulous individuals decided to make money out of the popular belief in mermaids. In the 1800s, Barnum's travelling show put a disgusting imitation of a mermaid on display and charged people to see it. They did, in their thousands!



▲ **TRICK IN THE TAIL**
People came in droves to see this 1825 monstrosity. The mermaid is made up of a dried monkey's head and body stitched on to a fish tail.



▲ **A GOOD YARN**
An illustration from a 1700s 'chapbook', a book of popular stories.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

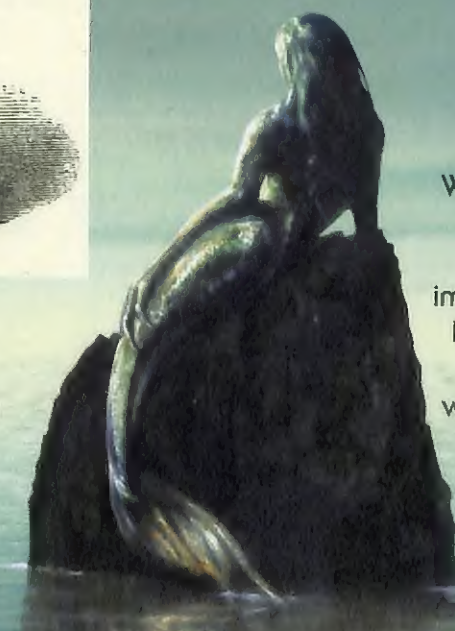
So, if we agree that mermaids do not, and have never existed, what is it that made, otherwise rational, people convinced of their existence?

What seems the most likely explanation is that sailors were tricked by the human-sounding cries



▲ **BUXOM BEAUTIES!**
Even though their habit of cradling their young looks spookily human – it would be hard to mistake these dugongs for beautiful mermaids.

of dugongs, manatees and seals – all perfectly normal sea creatures. What's more, brief glimpses of these mammals, seen from a distance, could have sparked sailors' imaginations. Dugongs, for example, have a habit of holding their young with the upper body out of the water – like a woman would hold a baby. Surely, though, sailors would never have described a dugong – or any such sea creature for that matter – as beautiful?



FREAKY FOREST PUZZLES

SINK OR SWIM?
The skungy swamp is a treacherous place. Only some of the grassy tussocks make a safe path. Freaky Forest insects sit around – but do they help or hinder the traveller? You must decide which is the safe way across?

ASH	ELM	POPLAR
BAOBAB	GUM	REDWOOD
BAY	HAZEL	SANDAL WOOD
BLACK WATTLE	HOLM	SAPODILLA
BO-TREE	IRONWOOD	SASSAFRAS
BOX	LARCH	SLOE
COCONUT PALM	LIME	TEA
DEAL	MAPLE	TEAK
ELDER	MAY	WALNUT
	OAK	WITCH HAZEL
	PALM	YEW

POPLAR
REDWOOD
SANDAL WOOD
SAPODILLA
SASSAFRAS
SLOE
TEA
TEAK
WALNUT
WITCH HAZEL
YEW

SINK OR SWINE

The skungy swamp is a treacherous place. Only some of the grassy tussocks make a safe path. Freaky Forest insects sit around – but do they help or hinder the traveller? You must decide which is the safe way across?

Can you find all these trees (left) hidden in the wicked web? They appear horizontally, vertically, diagonally and back to front. Letters can be used more than once.

A 30m-tall (99ft) American elm tree, which stands alone on the Kansas prairies, has been officially declared a one-tree state forest.

Answer these two questions to see
what's got the goblins
guffawing!

What tree can you hold
in your hand?
What do you call a tree
with loads of friends?

FEARSOME FACTS

In ancient Scandinavia anyone picking a branch from a sacred tree had his or her navel cut out and nailed to it. They were then chased around the tree until their intestines were wrapped around it!

CODE CRACKER

Troll's door is guarded by a secret code. What does it say?

N W O D D N A P U D A E R
W A N D Y O U W I L L S E E
N R O O D S I H T T A H T
E E D S N O T A N Y K E Y

GET CONNECTED

There's more than heads and tails linking these snakes. Can you work out what it is?

FEATHERED FACTS

The bright, red-feathered scalps of Acron woodpeckers were collected by the Native Americans of California and worn as decorations on ceremonial costumes.

ANSWERS

SINK OR SWIM? The safe path is marked by the insects sitting in alphabetical order of their names: owl, beetle, caterpillar, dragonfly, earwig, flea, greenfly, GÖBLIN GRAFFITI: Palm tree and Poplar. ODD BIRD: The vulture on the lower branch, on the left, has an upturned beak. CODE CRACKER: READ UP AND DOWN AND YOU WILL SEE THAT THIS DOOR NEEDS NOT ANY KEY GET CONNECTED: The number of stripes on each pair of snakes (top, bottom, left and right) add up to 13.

WICKED WEB